

**Saint Paul Planning Commission  
City Hall Conference Center  
15 Kellogg Boulevard West**

**Minutes May 4, 2007**

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, May 4, 2007, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

**Commissioners Present:** Mmes. Donnelly-Cohen, Lu, McCall, Morton, Porter, Smitten, Wencil, and Messrs. Alton, Barrera, Commers, Cudahy, Gordon, Johnson, Kramer, Margulies, Rosemark, and Spaulding.

**Commissioners Absent:** Ms. \*Faricy, and Messrs. \*Bellus, \*Goodlow, and \*Nelson  
\*Excused

**Also Present:** Larry Soderholm, Planning Administrator; Anne Hunt, Mayor's Office; Peter Warner, Assistant City Attorney; Tom Beach, Department of Safety and Inspections; Al Torstenson, Andrew Jacobson, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development.

**I. Approval of minutes April 20, 2007.**

**MOTION:** *Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen moved approval of the minutes of April 20, 2007. Commissioner Commers seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

**II. Chair's Announcements**

None

**III. Planning Administrator's Announcements**

Larry Soderholm reported on planning-related business at the City Council for last week and their agenda for next week.

**IV. Zoning Committee**

**OLD BUSINESS**

#07-043-737 Holman Field Subdrain Improvements -- Conditional use permit for storm sewer work in the floodway and variances of setback from ordinary high water level, development on slopes greater than 12%, and rehabilitation of slopes greater than 18%. 644 Bayfield Street. (Patricia James, 651/266-6639)

**MOTION:** *Commissioner Morton moved to approve the resolution for the conditional use permit as mailed in the packet from Tom Beach.*

Commissioner Smitten said she disagreed with the statements in the resolution saying that the storm sewer work and reconstruction of the slopes in the floodway are consistent with MNRRA Tier II standards. These statements are in finding 5 on page 6 of the resolution. She said she would not vote for the resolution as presented. Through her previous work she was familiar with MNRRA Tier II and the project meets some of the standards but does not meet all of them.

Chair Alton reminded the Commission that it voted on the two airport cases two meetings ago and asked the staff to put the oral motions from that meeting into the written resolutions for formal action. So the primary question for the Commission today is to ensure that the two written resolutions accurately reflect the Commission's previous discussion and decisions.

**MOTION TO AMEND:** *Commissioner Johnson moved to amend the resolution by adding the word "substantially" before the phrase "consistent with MNRRA Tier II status" wherever the phrase appears. He said the Zoning Committee discussed the pluses and minuses of the project at length and concluded that on balance the project was a benefit. Commissioner Smitten seconded the motion. The motion to amend carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

**MAIN MOTION:** Chair Alton called for the vote on the motion to approve the resolution as amended. *The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

#07-043-921 Holman Field Subdrain Improvements – Modification of approved site plan for Holman Field drainage improvements. 644 Bayfield Street. (Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)

**MOTION:** *Commissioner Morton moved to approve the resolution for the modification of the approved site plan as mailed in the packet from Tom Beach. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Victoria Park Master Plan (#07-056563) -- Mr. Soderholm reported that he had approved a minor modification of the Victoria Park Master Plan to allow senior apartments to be built on one of the parcels. No appeal was filed so the change went into effect this week and the staff is going to reprint the plan showing the change.

## **V. Comprehensive Planning Committee**

Mississippi River Critical Area Zoning Overlay Regulations – Release draft for public hearing and set public hearing date on June 15, 2007.

**MOTION:** *Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen moved to release the draft for a public hearing and to set the public hearing on June 15, 2007. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Mr. Soderholm clarified that actually two versions of the proposed Critical Area overlay zoning regulations will be sent out for the public hearing. The first version is the recommendation of the Critical Area Task Force, that is, the draft ordinance they submitted to the City Council last summer. The second version is the Task Force's draft plus some amendments to it proposed by

the City staff. At the public hearing the commission will hear comments on both versions. After the hearing the Comprehensive Planning Committee will consider all the input and will recommend one ordinance to the full commission. In its meetings so far, the committee has been learning about the proposed regulations and has waited while the staff finished its proposed revisions; the committee has not taken any substantive positions on either version of the draft ordinance.

Chair Donnelly-Cohen announced the Comprehensive Planning Committee will have a joint meeting with the former Mississippi River Critical Area Task Force on May 15, 2007, at 4:00 p.m. in City Hall, Room 41.

#### Update from the Water Comprehensive Plan Task Force

PED staff Larry Soderholm gave an update on the progress of the Water Comprehensive Plan Task Force. He listed some of the big issues: how to increase density while decreasing impervious surfaces; how to redesign parks to play a larger role in the hydrological system; how to reduce run-off from streets and parking lots; monitoring the effectiveness of stormwater BMPs; improving enforcement of erosion and sedimentation standards; funding sewer and water infrastructure replacement; and increasing public awareness of clean water issues.

Commissioner Johnson added that water and energy are the two keystone issues of the twenty-first century. They are the fundamentals for sustainability in Saint Paul. We have taken our water for granted for too long; more really needs to be done. The task force is a wonderful group of dedicated and knowledgeable people. In particular he thanked Anne Hunt from the Mayor's for her participation. He invited all planning commissioners to attend any of the task force meetings.

## **VI. Neighborhood and Current Planning Committee**

### University Avenue Property Tax Task Force Report

Presentation by Jon Commers, chair of the task force

Commissioner Commers said he was pleased to have the opportunity to chair the task force looking at property taxes in the University Avenue Corridor. Financial independence and maintaining a competitive advantage for the city are two keys to being a successful city in the future. He said that certain tensions are inevitable parts of this discussion and the task force tried to deal with them. There is a tension between concentrating more tax base in the corridor and preserving the affordability of living or doing business in the corridor. At the level of the individual owner, there is a tension between having to pay higher property taxes and enjoying the appreciation of your property's value.

Commissioner Commers explained the mechanics of the property tax system and that it is based on "net tax capacity," which is derived from estimated market value and the property class rates for different types of property. The class rates were compressed in the early part of this decade by the legislature, which has produced a shift away from commercial and industrial property onto residential homestead property.

The task force was surprised to find that over the last five years property tax increases along University Avenue have been about average compared to other commercial strips in the city.

There does not appear to be any premium due to the anticipation of LRT, at least not yet. The task force made some suggestions for the University Avenue corridor. The City should use zoning rules to encourage taxable uses on the avenue's frontage. The City should revise parking standards to provide enough parking, but not so much that it dampens development and the tax base. Different parts of the city have different parking needs; parking should be gauged to the different neighborhoods. Finally the City should do fiscal impact analysis as a tool for guiding development and ensuring the taxes generated by new development mirror the public costs the City will incur.

**VII. Communications Committee**

None

**VIII. Task Force Reports**

Commissioner Kramer announced the Land Use Comprehensive Plan Task Force will meet Wednesday, May 9, 2007 at the Rondo Community Library.

Commissioner Rosemark announced the Ford Site Planning Task Force will have its regular meeting on Monday, May 7, 2007 at the Lumen Christi Catholic Church, and will have a larger public input meeting on Tuesday, May 8, 2007 at the Saint Paul Academy/Summit School, 1712 Randolph Avenue.

Commissioner Porter announced the University Avenue Central Corridor Task Force will meet on Thursday, May 10, 2007 at the Central Corridor Resource Center.

Commissioner Commers announced the Transportation Comprehensive Plan Task Force will meet on Tuesday, May 8, 2007 at the Central Corridor Resource Center.

**IX. Old Business -- None**

**X. New Business -- None**

**XI. Adjournment -- Meeting adjourned at 10:18 a.m.**

Recorded and prepared by  
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary  
Planning and Economic Development Department  
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,

Approved \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

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Larry Soderholm, AICP  
Planning Administrator

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Marilyn Porter  
Secretary of the Planning Commission

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